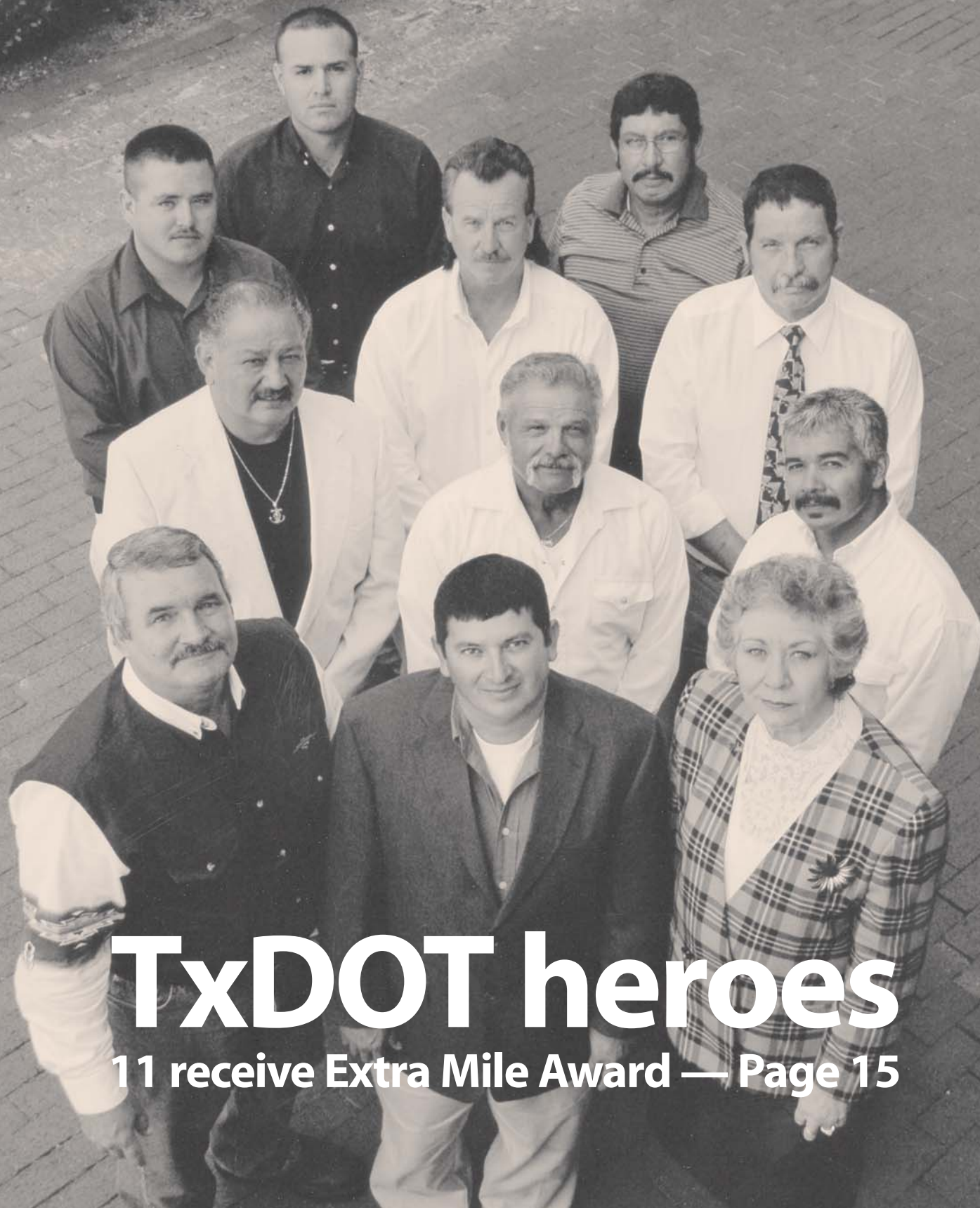


# T*RANSPORTATION* NEWS

November-December 2003

Volume 29 Number 3



## TxDOT heroes

11 receive Extra Mile Award — Page 15

## On the cover:

Eleven recipients of the 2003 TxDOT Extra Mile Award were among many in the department to receive recognition during the year. This issue details their heroism, along with the many achievements of other TxDOT people who provide year-round quality and service.

TxDOT photo by Geoff Appold

## Contents

Straight Talk.....	2
New safety rest areas.....	3
Letter from the editor.....	3
Short Course summary.....	4
Project awards.....	6
Short Course awards.....	12
Extra Mile awards.....	15
TxDOT Roundup.....	18
Rodeo.....	19
Service Awards.....	20
Letters.....	22
Calendar.....	23
Backtracks.....	Back Cover

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## Straight Talk



# Holidays put TxDOT's work on display — and to the test

by **Mike Behrens**

Executive Director

Our work is all about getting our fellow Texans to their destinations safely. We link towns, cities, businesses, families and friends, and provide safe passage for all Texans and visitors. Day in and day out, we are on the roads installing the traffic signs, signals and railroad warning devices that control traffic and protect drivers. In addition to planning, building and maintaining our transportation system, every workday of the year we promote traffic safety programs to help persuade motorists to use safety belts, slow down, drive cautiously and avoid the lethal combination of drinking and driving.

What we do is important year-round, of course. Yet during the holidays, the effects of our work to improve mobility, congestion and safety go on display to more people as more Texans crisscross the state on holiday visits.

Your decision to get up in the morning to go to work ultimately has a very up-close-and-personal effect on your fellow Texans. You and what you do determines, for example, how long it will take the young family to get to the mall to shop. We help Texans make it to the airport in time to make their flights home; we pave the way for that last-minute dash to the grocery store before it closes to get some extra cranberries.

Our visibility is heightened at this time of year when getting there means seeing loved ones again, re-living childhood traditions, establishing family ties that may have loosened amid the routine of daily life.

This is also the time of year when more of us from TxDOT travel. As a result, we become our own customers and witness firsthand the impact we have on the lives of all who travel in Texas. The holidays put our work to the test, and we can be proud of what we do all of the time.

I appreciate all your hard work and I wish you and yours best wishes for a happy holiday season. So that you return to work after the holidays safely, please:

- ★ Don't drink and drive.
- ★ Avoid distractions, including talking on the cell phone, reading, applying makeup, eating while driving.
- ★ Check your irritation before you get behind the wheel; frustrated and angry drivers make for disaster.
- ★ Rest up and be patient on the road.

Finally, be prepared for an exciting 2004 at TxDOT. ★



## Letter from the editor



During the 19th century Texas Rangers were willing to risk their lives protecting Texans from hostile Indians and bandits, but the way they saw it, their job description did not include working on public roads.

On April 30, 1890, Texas Ranger Capt. Frank Jones sat in his camp outside Cotulla and wrote a letter to his boss, Adjutant General W.H. King.

"Is it lawful," Jones wrote, "for Rangers to be summoned to work the public roads of any County in which they may be stationed?"

Jones said he had heard that LaSalle County officials were thinking about pressing his rangers into service in maintaining roads in the county. That, or pay the county for the privilege of not working.

Back then, that's how counties provided transportation: All able-bodied men between the ages of 18 and 60 were legally obligated to work on the roads five days a year or pay someone to take their place. It was like jury duty, only you didn't get any money from the county.

King must have found that state peace officers were exempt from the law, or gotten a ruling that rangers encamped in a particular county as part of their official duties were not legal residents. There's no record

that Jones and his men had to lay down their Winchesters and pick up shovels to improve mobility in South Texas or anywhere else.

The history lesson here is that in the horse-and-buggy era, using county residents to build or maintain roads was a workable system, even if rangers were exempt. Eventually, the model was not as effective, and roadways evolved into a state responsibility.

Now, with TxDOT moving toward increased use of tolls in building new highways, the model is changing again. But the construction and maintenance process still doesn't include rangers.

★ ★ ★

We got some nice e-mail from folks who appreciated the TNews Online "extra" that hit the figurative streets of cyberspace shortly after the major award winners were announced during the annual Transportation Short Course. Also, judging from the number of hits recorded, you also enjoyed reading the online coverage of the ghostly goings on in the Greer Building.

Speaking of the Internet, the Public Information Office has its new site up on Crossroads. The site

is designed to be a reference source for all of our public information and media liaison officers. It's still the place to find TNews Online, as well as back issues of Transportation News.

★ ★ ★

The letter we got from James L. Rhodes of Camp Hill, Ala. wouldn't fit in our monthly letters section, but it still deserves publication. Actually, there was no letter, just a tear sheet from the Coosa County *News*.

Highlighted in pink were a couple of comments Rhodes made in a column called "Travel Journal." For reasons that will be obvious, we're happy to pass them on:

"One can not help but being impressed by how clean Texas highways are maintained. To their credit, Texans take pride in the manner in which their freeways are exhibited to travelers ... Texans take littering very seriously. If we only had that spirit here, we would be a much better place."

Maybe we could loan Alabama some Texas Rangers to perk up citizen interest in litter prevention.

—Mike Cox



— from the staff of  
*Transportation News*

# Short Course outlines way to TxDOT's future

by **Judy Curtis**  
Managing Editor

Employees attending the 77th annual Transportation Short Course at Texas A&M University were told to learn and learn fast the new play-book of the post-House Bill 3588 TxDOT.

That bill, passed during the 78th Legislature, sets TxDOT apart from other state transportation departments and gives the agency funding options that promise to speed delivery of new roads and transportation systems in the state.

"Time is very important to the business we're in," Commissioner Ric Williamson told the Short Course audience. "And the times are changing." Williamson noted that TxDOT's job is to respect — and to address — the time constraints of all Texas motorists.

"The Texans of the future will have no patience with state employees who don't deliver something that gives them maximum use of their time," he said.

Earlier at the morning session of the Short Course, winners of the five key annual awards and the Extra Mile Award recipients were announced. (See story starting on Page 12).

TxDOT administration spoke during the afternoon session of Short Course to explain the changes brought about by HB 3588.

"We expect every district — rural, metro, and urban — to accelerate their letting schedules by using the new instruments given to us by the legislature," Executive Director Mike Behrens said. "The commission will be closely scrutinizing the districts that are leveraging their funding."

The new funding tools will allow TxDOT to maintain a \$3.7 to \$4 billion letting in 2004-2007.

Without these tools, cash flow currently indicates an approximate \$2.8 to \$3 billion letting for those years and beyond.

"We need to dive into it as



TxDOT photo by Geoff Appold

## Mike Behrens charts future of TxDOT at Short Course.

quickly and as often as possible so that we can start making use of the tools provided in the legislation," said Behrens.

He said the new law gives the department, the commission, local governments, and the private sector an array of options to improve the timely delivery of transportation solutions.

"To meet these challenges, we need to completely overhaul and refocus the way we deliver infrastructure," said Behrens.

The first phase of the overhaul, focused in the districts, involves identifying projects that benefit from accelerated construction. "You don't need to wait for Austin to impose any deadlines or guidelines.

No one is more familiar with your projects than you are," said Behrens. "We need to deliver."

Behrens noted that TxDOT has never had reason — until now — to alter its assertion that only about one-third of all needed highway projects can be funded. "We have more needs than resources," he said.

The new funding tools will change all that.

"It's important that we all understand the new world we're living in, and that we make the most of the opportunities available under this bill," said Deputy Executive Director Steve Simmons. "We are presented with an opportunity to

■ See Short Course, Page 5

## Short Course: learn the new playbook

Continued from Page 4

accelerate our entire program — to move a substantial number of projects up through the pipeline,” he said.

“First, we will be looking at projects that are finished, on the shelf, waiting for funding. Can we use any of the various 3588 tools to accelerate lettings on these projects?”

“Next,” Simmons explained, “we will look at projects that are at various stages of development. Are these projects toll viable? Can they be incorporated into the Trans Texas Corridor? Can we accelerate them with comprehensive development agreements? Or would an RMA (Regional Mobility Authority) be able to deliver the projects more quickly and efficiently?”

Districts also were called on to leverage their funding by such means as tolls, comprehensive development agreements, toll equity, and RMAs.

“We have great potential to rapidly accelerate projects,” said Behrens. “So let’s start looking inside our new toolbox.”

Simmons noted that a key job that will fall on the districts is “to ensure that your local transportation stakeholders are fully informed and ready to participate.”

He said the department’s administration envisions seminars at which local government leaders, local transportation engineers, city planners, consultants, TxDOT personnel, and community representatives get briefed on the array of options available to deliver transportation infrastructure.

Commissioner Robert Nichols noted that the various transportation funding options and the actions taken by the commission put Texas in an enviable position among departments of transportation.

The combination of tools, he said, “gives us a real shot at doing what no state has been able to do: turn the corner on congestion in urbanized areas without sacrificing our basic programs in statewide connectivity or preservation of the system.”

Commission Chair John Johnson urged TxDOT employees to think of themselves as customers of TxDOT’s work product as they look for applications for the new funding options. “I don’t think that any of us like being stuck in traffic or experiencing delays due to construction,” he said. “What we prefer are consistent driving times to our usual destinations, smooth rides, and choices.”

That is what the public is also demanding, said Williamson. “We have no choice but to accept debt financing and tolls, direct or indirect, as financing tools to build these assets. Whether TxDOT embraces that will dictate the success in 10 to 15 years of this organization,” he said.

For more details on the new tools:

<http://www.dot.state.tx.us/>. Look under “New State of Transportation: Implementing New Tools.” ★



## Primer on new TxDOT tools

Here are some — but not all — of the elements of TxDOT’s new funding tools, discussed during the Short Course workshops.

**Texas Mobility Fund** — Authorizes certain transportation-related fees moved to the mobility fund, enabling TxDOT to accelerate completion of highway projects. The fund will receive deposits that will bring about the leveraging of \$2.5 to \$3 billion in new funding, enabling projects to begin sooner and reducing the impact of construction inflation. The commission will consider looking to the Mobility Fund for start-up toll projects.

**Bonds** — With approval of Proposition 14, voters gave Texas the authority to leverage up to \$3 billion in bond funds for transportation projects. This allows the commission to accelerate construction by issuing debt, which is then retired by existing sources of revenue from the State Highway Fund. At least \$600 million of the proceeds must be used to for highway safety. Bond proceeds may not be used for projects on the Trans Texas Corridor, and no more than \$1 billion per year in bonds may be issued.

**Toll roads** — Local governments may now take advantage of the benefits of two new toll rules. **Toll equity** allows state highway funds to be combined with other funds to build public and private toll roads. Because toll roads generate the revenue to pay for projects now, toll roads are the fastest way to quickly improve mobility in Texas. **Toll conversion** allows segments of non-tolled state highways to be converted to toll roads. A local toll road authority would handle its operation and maintenance.

**Pass-through toll agreements** — Timely, needed improvements to a state highway are made at the local level. The state reimburses the communities through a traffic-based fee. Tolls are not collected from individuals.

**Regional mobility authorities (RMA)** — RMAs give local governments greater ability to provide mobility and safety benefits to citizens, allowing the state to direct its resources to other critical needs in the region. RMAs can establish tolls, and may lease part of a transportation facility to hotels, gas stations, stores, garages, rail-road tracks, or restaurants. In addition to turnpikes, RMAs may also own railroads, airports and utilities. They may also enter into comprehensive development agreements.

**Comprehensive development agreements (CDA)** — This new method of project delivery rolls design and construction of a toll road project into one contract. Project financing, right-of-way acquisition, maintenance and operation of a toll road can all be included in a CDA.

**Trans Texas Corridor** — Legislation gives the state authority to finance the proposed 4,000 miles of new corridor containing roads, rail and utility corridors.

**Rail** — TxDOT now can build and manage rail infrastructure, including the acquisition and development of existing facilities. HB 3588 authorizes the department to plan, construct, and maintain rail facilities or systems.



# Awards hail major road projects for their construction, design

TxDOT this fall recognized department projects whose participants demonstrated exceptional cooperation in completing a complex task.

Project awards, presented at an Austin luncheon sponsored by Associated General Contractors, singled out those who have gone above and beyond in terms of cooperation and partnership, said Amadeo Saenz, TxDOT's assistant executive director for engineering operations. The awards sought to recognize construction and design excellence. Two projects received both awards.

"I am honored to be here with people committed to making transportation in Texas better," Saenz said. "Without the dedication and commitment of people such as you, we would not have the excellent and high-quality roadways we enjoy today."

## **AMARILLO DISTRICT: Construction Award**

■ Work began in December 2001 to install a monitoring system with remote-area cameras for an intelligent transportation system along Interstate 40. Work on the \$1.6 million project was 99 percent complete a year later. Mica Corporation was the contractor.

Because the system's cameras were located more than 50 miles from the district office, TxDOT and Mica worked with several telephone and power companies to resolve project details within the companies' service areas. Other cooperative efforts included working with sign makers to ensure that dynamic-message signs along the roadway were strong enough to withstand the powerful Panhandle winds.

## **ATLANTA DISTRICT: Construction Award**

■ The \$2.9 million project to construct FM 2625 in Harrison County drew high praise from the district's director of construction. In nominating this project for recognition, he said, "Although this project does not meet the previous requirements for complexity, we are nominating it due to the unprecedented degree of quality and workmanship exhibited during the prosecution of the contract." He praised those working on the project for their "desire for a quality product and their attention to workmanship." D.L. Lennon Inc. was the contractor.

## **AUSTIN DISTRICT: Construction Award**

■ The 1.3-mile project on State Highway 29, with associated grading and surfacing, replaced an existing bridge over Inks Lake. Capital Excavation was the contractor. Project workers faced a variety of challenges that included irregular topography, seamless granite bedrock, and water levels on the lake that couldn't be lowered. Divers faced demanding work: cutting drilled shaft forms, welding collars for footing forms, and inspecting work. Other work included placing concrete under water.

## **CORPUS CHRISTI DISTRICT: Construction Award Design Award**

■ On Jan. 25, 2002, the Corpus Christi District saw completion of a project to replace the 1932 Maury Maverick Bridge and its approaches. Near Falls City, the new 430-foot bridge spans the San Antonio River in Karnes County. Valued at \$508,000, the project was complete

17 days ahead of schedule. Liska Construction was the contractor. Special challenges arose because the existing bridge had been listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Destroying the old bridge was not an option, so it was relocated to a hike-and-bike trail in Alvin.

## **DALLAS DISTRICT: Construction Award**

■ Construction of the Lake Ray Hubbard State Highway 66 bridges east of Dallas — a project valued at nearly \$41 million — was completed last summer. Traylor Brothers Inc. was the contractor. Use of precast bridge caps saved an estimated 180 days of delay on the project. The project also saw use of ground-granulated blast-furnace slag in several of the concrete mixes to increase structural durability. Bridge-research funding from the Federal Highway Administration paid for use of the special slag.

## **EL PASO DISTRICT: Construction Award**

■ This \$11.7 million reconstruction project involving intersections along Airway Boulevard in El Paso began in October 2000 and was completed a year later, eight days ahead of schedule. H.D. Abrams was the contractor. Special challenges included the presence of two railroad crossings along the mile-long road. While the work schedule was aggressive, every effort was made to minimize disruption to the many businesses along the route.

## **HOUSTON DISTRICT: Construction Award Design Award**

■ Williams Brothers Construction began work in June 1999 on the

■ See Project awards, Page 7

# Project awards hail TxDOT quality

Continued from Page 6

U.S. 59-Southwest Freeway, one of Houston's major freeways. The project is known as Houston Gateway, the name given to four bridges in close proximity and spanning the freeway. The tied-arch bridges were constructed during the rebuilding of the Southwest Freeway in Houston's Museum District. The bridges are a regional landmark and a source of pride for the city. The bright white structures feature distinguishing red spheres during the day and are visible at night with their low-intensity fiber-optic lights.

## PHARR DISTRICT: Construction Awards

■ The U.S. 83-Palmview Project is a 5.5-mile extension of the expressway through Palmview to handle 61,000 vehicles per day. The \$33 million project called for overpasses at major intersections to eliminate traffic congestion and to improve safety. Many constraints faced the contractor, Williams Brothers Construction. Chief among these was a restricted right of way, 30 percent less than is usually available. Also, the work occurred in a densely populated area with high traffic volumes, demanding close attention to the traffic-control plan. To minimize inconvenience, TxDOT and the contractor stayed focused on advising the community and the media of upcoming work.

■ The \$6.8 million project to construct 1.1 miles of a four-lane divided urban highway with overpass at U.S. 281 in Hidalgo County called for grading, structures, lime-treated subgrade, flex base, asphalt concrete pavement, Portland Cement concrete pavement, signing, striping, signals, and widening of shoulders. Work was completed in the 294 days scheduled. McAllen Construction was the contractor. Several

problems arose.

However, because of the strong partnership between the contractor and TxDOT, all challenges were overcome to improve mobility for the more than 12,000 vehicles entering and leaving the United States daily at the border crossing. The completed project significantly improved traffic flow in the area while enhancing pedestrian safety at the intersection. Another benefit: the beauty of the bridge offers a welcoming impression for travelers entering the United States from Mexico.

## SAN ANTONIO DISTRICT: Design Award

■ This award recognizes efforts in completion of the first phase of reconstruction of the interchange at Interstate 10 and Interstate 410. Designers had to deal with a 40-year-old interchange on San Antonio's northwest side that had been overwhelmed by traffic with an average daily traffic count up to 220,000. It was the first project in the San Antonio District to use several methods for accelerating construction.

## WICHITA FALLS DISTRICT: Construction Award

■ This \$45.1 million project called for construction of an elevated freeway on Interstate 44 through the center of Wichita Falls. The project was substantially completed six months ahead of the contractor's original work schedule and a year ahead of the contract's completion deadline. No longer do motorists traveling U.S. 287 and I-44 through Wichita Falls have to exit the freeway and make their way through more than a half-dozen traffic signals to return to the freeway. Austin Bridge and Road was the contractor. ★

## Top 10 TxDOT projects

The value of contracts for the top 100 transportation projects in Texas, according to figures recently provided by the TxDOT Construction Division, is more than \$5.2 billion.

Here are the top 10, ranked according to the amount of the contract award.

**1. \$262.5 million,**  
Houston District,  
Williams Brothers Construction Co.,  
reconstruction of an eight-lane freeway  
on Interstate 610 in Harris County.

**2. \$260.9 million,**  
Dallas District,  
Zachry Construction Corp., construction  
of an interchange on Interstate  
635 in Dallas County.

**3. \$207.8 million,**  
Houston District,  
Williams Brothers Construction Co.,  
reconstruction and widening of  
Interstate 10 in Harris County.

**4. \$135.9 million,**  
Houston District,  
Traylor Brothers Inc.,  
replacement of an existing bridge on  
Interstate 45 in Galveston County.

**5. \$108.0 million,**  
Austin District,  
Zachry Construction Corp. and Gilbert  
Texas Construction,  
construction of a turnpike facility with  
frontage roads and toll plazas on Loop 1  
in Travis County.

**6. \$103.0 million,**  
Austin District,  
Archer-Western Contractors,  
construction of a turnpike facility and  
interchange with Interstate 35 in  
Williamson County.

**7. \$101.6 million,**  
Austin District,  
Austin Bridge and Road,  
for grading, structures, base and  
surfacing on State Highway 45 in  
Williamson County.

**8. \$96.8 million,**  
Dallas District,  
Gilbert Texas Construction,  
for grading, structures and surfacing  
for widening and adding interchanges  
on Interstate 30 in Dallas County.

**9. \$92.4 million,**  
Dallas District,  
Granite Construction Co.,  
for construction of a new-location free-  
way on State Highway 190 in Dallas  
County.

**10. \$87.8 million,**  
Austin District,  
J.D. Abrams Inc.,  
for second-phase construction of an  
interchange and four direct connects  
on U.S. Highway 290 in Travis County.



TxDOT photos by Kevin Stillman

**Multiple awards recognized the Houston Gateway project this year.**

# And this year's winners are ...

TxDOT people and projects received scores of awards this year. Some of them stemmed from work recognized by outside groups such as the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO). Other awards were based on the assessments of TxDOT staff to reward excellence within the department's ranks through various programs like the Texas Quality Initiative (TQI) and Journey Toward Excellence (JTE) quality awards.

## **JOURNEY TOWARD EXCELLENCE**

These awards recognize TxDOT employees and teams demonstrating leadership and commitment to improve department services, prod-

ucts and processes, while obtaining tangible results.

**Individual category:** Dalton Rogers, automation administrator in the Yoakum District, received the JTE award for updating material safety data sheets. In the process, he streamlined a cumbersome process, reducing the time and cost of updating the information. Five divisions and 11 districts use this system.

**Work Group/Team category:** The Local Government Project Procedures (LGPP) team received the JTE award for work focusing on local government project issues. The team established an ongoing forum among 11 divisions and two administrative offices to develop and implement federally approved guid-

ance relating to construction, design, environmental affairs and contracting for transportation projects. "The LGPP team has filled an obvious and long-standing need for coordination between government agencies involved with transportation projects," the award judges said. In addition, the team was recognized for its group cooperation, which eliminated the need to hire outside consultants for this job.

Winners were Paula Bishir, Audit Office; Kenneth Mullin, Bridge Division; Elizabeth Boswell, Renee Frisinger, Scott Nichols, Paul St. Louis, Construction Division; Treavor Bogard, Pat Bittner, Mike McAndrew, Contract Services

■ See Winners, Page 9



# Winners gain recognition for TxDOT with awards

Continued from Page 8

Office; Tom Beeman, Ramin Thomasian, Maria Burke, George Gold, Design Division; Ann Irwin, Environmental Division; David Smith, Finance Division; Sil Romero, General Services Division; Wesley Burford, Information Services Division; Jim Daily, Roger Williams, Maintenance Division; John Ewald, Right of Way Division; Meg Moore, Traffic Division; Wayne Wells, Amanda Wood, Transportation Planning and Programming Division; and Ken Seiler, Federal Highway Administration.

The Port Aransas Ferry System Workgroup in the Corpus Christi District received the JTE award for its efforts to improve customer service and cut down on ferry wait time. The team did so by extending hours of operation and increasing the number of available boats. Team members also developed improved maintenance schedules and methods, and improved loading schedules.

All of the JTE winners also received awards through the Western Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials Quality Support Program. Both the TxDOT teams were recognized by the AASHTO Standing Committee on Quality in the AASHTO Team Excellence Program.

Also, the Amarillo District won an AASHTO Standing Committee on Quality Team Excellence Award for overcoming technical challenges in the installation and operation of a rural intelligent transportation system. The team's work resulted in availability of reliable and accurate information to the traveling public during inclement weather and other traffic-related incidents.

## AASHTO AWARDS

TxDOT won two of the nine AASHTO president's awards given

to state departments of transportation this year.

**Planning category:** John Barton, newly appointed Beaumont District engineer, received the award for his role in creating a rural transportation council while serving in the Wichita Falls District. Barton worked to form the 71-member Cross Plains Rural Transportation Council, representing a nine county area. Since creation of the council, public participation in the transportation process has grown 500 percent.

**Highway category:** The \$32.5 million Houston Gateway project received the AASHTO award and the National Partnership for Highway Quality Achievement Award, Special Recognition for Quality in a Structures Project, and other project awards. (See story, Page 6).

The project widened a mile-long section of the Southwest Freeway, which bisected Houston's museum district. The area was restricted horizontally by well-established neighborhoods and vertically by four spanning bridges. This was addressed by replacing the existing bridges with four steel tied-arch bridges, increasing vertical clearance to 16.5 feet.

According to the AASHTO award, "The new bridges' design represents innovative thinking; the old bridges' destruction was innovative as well ... The longest closure of the freeway was only 51 hours, and none of the closures affected any of Houston's infamous rush-hour traffic."

## TEXAS QUALITY INITIATIVE

**TQI Teamwork:** U.S. 287 - Interstate 44 elevated freeway. Wichita Falls District and Austin Bridge and Road L.P. of Dallas. Project Cost: \$45 million

TxDOT's Bridge Division designed the project, incorporating the community's architecture and culture into the design. Prior to construction, 45

citizens, contractors, and department employees attended a two-day partnering meeting to plan, discuss goals, and develop an action plan for tackling project issues.

In partnership with the community, an intensive public relations and information campaign kept local businesses, homeowners, and travelers informed of the most current and future details of the project. This included more than 100 press releases, constant radio and television coverage, several brochures, and hundreds of letters to local stakeholders.

Funding constraints eliminated a planned entrance ramp. But as construction progressed, TxDOT requested a change order to add this ramp. Originally estimated at \$2.1 million, Austin Bridge and Road bid \$1.62 million, with only a 30 working day extension to the contract time. This completed the ramp years sooner than any future letting could, at a far lower price, especially when future cost is calculated.

**TQI Quality, Gold Level:** U.S. 83 Expressway/Palmview project. Pharr District and Williams Brothers Construction Company Inc. (Designer: TEDSI Infrastructure Group Inc.). Project Cost: \$33 million.

Despite the design challenges of a restricted 200-foot right of way, this 5.5-mile, four-lane divided highway extension through Palmview was developed into a four-lane, controlled-access facility. It now has eight retaining walls, five bridges with auxiliary lanes, 10 access ramps, four-lane frontage roads and a storm-sewer system designed to accommodate expected future needs.

Key stakeholders were contacted early in the planning process. An effective traffic control plan prevented major traffic delays. Lane closures were scheduled to off-peak hours; two 10-hour shifts expedited construction of the frontage roads and installa-

■ See Winners, Page 10

# Winners at TxDOT garner multitude of awards

Continued from Page 9

tion of the storm-sewer system. Lime-treated subgrade was replaced with lime-treated flexible base, cutting time for this operation by 50 percent.

The project also instituted innovations like low profile concrete barriers, video imaging vehicle detection and other efficiencies that brought the project in six months ahead of schedule with zero lost time for accidents.

**TQI Quality, Silver Level:** Frankford Avenue (FM 2528) and North Loop 289 Overpass, Lubbock District and Granite Construction Company. Cost: \$13.4 million.

This project included construction of an interchange and three miles of widening and rehabilitation of existing highway.

TxDOT and Granite encouraged teamwork throughout the project. Frequent news releases and fliers helped to keep the public informed. Value-engineering decreased two frontage-road approaches from 600 to 300 feet, and the extra money was used to replace asphalt with concrete on the southbound Frankford approach to the frontage road.

Long-term improvements included using fast-track concrete, substituting concrete for asphalt at heavily traveled intersections, and using fly ash instead of concrete in the mix design to reduce cracking. Other improvements included using high-performance concrete and epoxy-coated steel on all bridge components, fiber-reinforced concrete for enhanced elasticity, changing to the most current requirements, and replacing the red stoplight on traffic signals with LED displays to enhance visibility.

TxDOT and Granite Construction worked closely to produce a quality product, within budget, on time, and with an excellent safety record. Granite also received a bonus for exceeding quality standards for hot mix design.

**TQI Innovation:** U.S. 59 Southwest Freeway – Houston Gateway Project. Designed by the Houston District's Bridge Design Section and constructed by Williams Brothers Construction Co. Inc. Project cost: \$35.6 million.

(Read more about this multi-award winner on Page 6.)

## OTHER AWARDS:

■ The Environmental Affairs Division won the **2003 Government Award** from the American Cultural Resources Association, a national organization of over 500 companies. This award is given to a government agency for its support of studies that are scientifically sound, meet high professional standards and are relevant to the local community. TxDOT was honored for its support of archeological work and public outreach on three projects: the Freedman's Cemetery project on North Central Expressway (Dallas District), the Mission Refugio project on U.S. 77 (Corpus Christi District) and the Rubin Hancock project on Parmer Lane (Austin District).

In each case, the excavations provided new information about the history of Texas. Further, each had a significant public outreach effort, carried out by the Environmental Affairs Division and the districts. The award recognizes TxDOT's commitment to building sound transportation projects in an environmentally sensitive manner.

■ The ad agency that produced three videos for the Traffic Operations Division won three **Telly** awards, annual recognition of outstanding non-network and cable TV programming.

Two Tellys were presented for the Traffic Engineering Section's Illumination Branch for videos that raise awareness and expertise in electrical installation on TxDOT

illumination construction projects. The third Telly was presented to the division's Traffic Safety Section for the "Before and After" anti-DWI television public service announcement featuring Jacqui Saburido.

■ Five department employees won the **Research Program Outstanding Project Director Award**. The recognition went to Andrew Wimsatt, Fort Worth District, for pavements research; Richard Reeves, Traffic Operations Division, for traffic operations research; Jenny Peterman, Austin District, for transportation planning research; Donald Lewis, General Services Division, for vehicle fuel research; John P. Vogel, Houston District, for structures research.

■ The San Angelo, Corpus Christi and El Paso districts each won **Bridge Project Development** awards. The awards go to districts that achieve the highest efficiency in bringing highway bridge replacement and rehabilitation program projects to letting, and in reducing structurally deficient and obsolete bridges.

■ The Pharr, Abilene, Austin and Fort Worth districts won **Bridge Safety Inspection** awards. The Pharr District won in the 500 and fewer category. The Abilene, Austin and Fort Worth districts won in the 1,500 or more category — all for achieving 100 percent compliance for routine safety inspections at their bridges.

■ Winners of the **2003 Commitment to Excellence in Design** awards — included the Abilene District (rural category), Lubbock District (urban category), and the San Antonio District (metro category).

To keep up with the awards programs available to and won by TxDOT employees, go to the Human Resources Division site at: <http://hrd-net/quality/Awards>. ☼

# New safety rest areas open in Donley County

by Mike Cox  
Editor

The only uninvited guest at the grand opening of the new Donley County safety rest areas was a southwest wind strong enough to wear out a windmill.

But the sun was shining and a gathering of local residents, elected officials and TxDOT personnel was nearly as radiant on Oct. 28 as TxDOT dedicated a pair of state-of-the-art rest areas on U.S. 287 between Memphis and Hedley, northwest of Childress.

The \$10.5 million, award-winning project, part of TxDOT's ongoing program to upgrade existing rest areas and build new facilities, had been under construction for a year. Federal enhancement dollars funded the project.

Up to 12,000 vehicles a day use the highway, about half of those being 18-wheelers, says Childress District Engineer Craig Clark. The new north-bound/south-bound facilities feature ample parking for the big rigs as well as cars, sport utility vehicles and pickups.

Designed by Phillip Swager Associates, the rest areas were built by Sedalco, L.P.

From a distance, the new safety rest areas look like they could be part of a Western movie set. The main building at each location has an ornate facade and covered porch reminiscent of an Old West storefront, while an attached wing looks more like a 19th century rail depot.

Across a man-made stone



TxDOT photo by Geoff Appold

**No, it's not a movie set: This is TxDOT's newest safety rest area, opened Oct. 28 on U.S. 287 in Donley County.**

arroyo, four structures resembling railroad cars shelter restrooms and picnic tables. The arroyo, as well as the roof of the main building, collects rainwater for diversion to an underground tank for future landscape irrigation use.

In addition to the more traditional amenities, these new facilities have air-conditioned lobbies with computer kiosks for weather and travel information, offices for law enforcement use, 24-hour video surveillance, storm shelters, water fountains, telephones and vending machines.

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**Up to 12,000 vehicles a day use the highway, about half of those being 18-wheelers.**

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"This new rest area will be here a lot of years," says Rep. Warren Chishum, whose district includes Donley County.

"This is a great addition to this highway and to Donley County."

Executive Director Mike Behrens, on hand for the grand opening, stressed TxDOT's efforts to enhance safety on the roadways.

A contract is expected to be let soon in the Waco District for new facilities on Interstate 35 in Bell County near Salado. ★

## Rest areas are designed for safety first

**Texas' 94 safety rest areas blend the pretty and the practical**

★ The aesthetic emphasis is in developing rest areas that match an area environmentally and culturally.

★ The primary practical aspect of the areas is safety. Rest areas are designed to help drivers fight fatigue, an insidious killer on our highways. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates that 1.5 per cent of all crashes can be laid to drowsiness or fatigue. Those crashes result in some 1,500 fatalities each year and another 71,000 injuries. Unfortunately, Texas has the highest number of fatigue-related crashes in the nation.

### Advice to travelers:

★ Don't drive more than 100 miles without stopping for a rest. Walk around, get something to drink (as long as it does not contain alcohol) and switch drivers if you can.

★ If you feel tired, especially if there's a TxDOT rest area at hand, pull over and take a 20-minute power nap. You'll be surprised at how refreshed you'll feel.

★ Don't try to cover too many miles in one day. ★



## Five stars receive awards

from the left:

★ **Audrey Daniels Kariel,**  
**Russell H. Perry Award**

★ **Frances S. Willison, P.E.**  
**Luther DeBerry Award**

★ **Barrie D. Cogburn**  
**Raymond E. Stotzer Jr. Award**

★ **Bob Daigh, P.E.**  
**Gibb Gilchrist Award**

★ **Bobby G. Littlefield Jr., P.E.**  
**Dewitt C. Greer Award**



TxDOT photo by Michael Amador

# Innovation, action characterize winners of coveted recognition

The most prestigious transportation-related awards in Texas were presented during Short Course on Oct. 13 at Texas A&M University. These Texas Transportation Institute awards recognize the best within TxDOT and among its supporters.

## GREER AWARD

Dallas native Bobby G. Littlefield Jr., P.E., is a Texas A&M University graduate. He has worked in the Paris District throughout a 19-year TxDOT career. For the past decade, he has managed the district's largest and most-urban area office in Sherman.

His cultivation of effective relationships with people and groups interested in transportation has paid off. For example, close coordination with local officials has resulted in the replacement of some 50 deteriorated bridges during the past 10 years.

Further, urban mobility has improved with the construction or reconstruction of eight city streets under his leadership. Many other mobility and safety

improvements have been accomplished, including major rehabilitation of an existing U.S. highway, completion of a new-location U.S. highway, and replacement of historic bridges at the site of a near war between Texas and Oklahoma in 1931.

Other accomplishments include implementation in the district of the first "Super 2" design sections (which add intermittent passing lanes to a busy state highway), and a \$46 million complete reconstruction of a major U.S. highway — the largest in the district's history.

Developing a diversified, well-trained and motivated workforce is a difficult task facing most supervisors. Littlefield has met the challenge by finding ways to integrate many traditional engineering and maintenance

■ See Awards, Page 13

## Transportation greats are names behind top awards

The Texas Transportation Institute presents five awards during the annual Transportation Short Course at Texas A&M University:

### DEWITT C. GREER

The Greer Award recognizes and encourages the skill, dedication, civic-mindedness, innovation, and performance excellence of TxDOT engineers. It is named for one of the legends of the department, a man whose career spanned from 1927 to 1981.

### GIBB GILCHRIST

The Gibb Gilchrist Award honors the performance of an outstanding TxDOT engineer. The award is named for a man who served two terms as State Highway Engineer in the 1920s and 1930s. Gilchrist left the department to become dean of engineering at Texas A&M and later served as president of the university. In 1944, he became the first chancellor of the Texas A&M System.

### LUTHER DeBERRY

The Luther DeBerry Award is presented for outstanding contributions to the state of Texas in the field of transportation. It is named for the man who served as the department's State Highway Engineer from 1973 to 1980.

### RUSSELL H. PERRY

The Russell H. Perry Award recognizes leadership in creating public awareness of the need for adequate transportation facilities in the state. It is named for the Dallas attorney, businessman and philanthropist.

### RAYMOND E. STOTZER JR.

The Raymond E. Stotzer Jr. Award is presented to a non-engineer who displays outstanding leadership, dedication and service to the department. It is named for the man who served as TxDOT's engineer-director from 1986 to 1989.

## Awards at Transportation Short Course hail achievements

Continued from Page 12

functions to promote better teamwork and efficiency.

Aware that a positive public perception of TxDOT is critical to the department's success, Littlefield has taken an active approach to telling the TxDOT story to the public and media. His policy: respond quickly to inquiries.

He is known for his commitment to protecting the environment. This has led to recognition of his office by Keep Texas Beautiful. Acknowledgment also came with an honorable mention Environmental Achievement Award for relocation of an historical truss bridge.

### GILCHRIST AWARD

Bob Daigh, P.E., is known for building consensus and creating partnerships, especially during times of high stress and big changes.

A University of Texas graduate, Daigh worked in the private sector before joining TxDOT 15 years ago.

His first department job was in the Georgetown Area Office where he faced the challenges of a congested interstate highway and a county loaded with deteriorating off-system bridges.

Moving to the district office in Austin, he took on a key role in the planning and design of transportation improvements in a political hotbed of the state. This front-line experience prepared Daigh as he was put in

charge of the planning and development of one of the biggest transportation projects in the country — the Central Texas Turnpike Project.

Stretching 65 miles, the project involves three separate but interconnecting highways winding in and out of more than a half-dozen separate jurisdictions.

In his role as director of planning and development in the Texas Turnpike Authority Division, Daigh was determined to make the much-needed transportation improvements a reality. He built consensus that helped move the project through the stages of public involvement and environmental clearance.

The focus then shifted to help secure project financing, which included the use of local contributions, state funds, a federal loan (the largest of its kind nationwide) and the sale of bonds.

To deliver the improved mobility and safety benefits faster, the project incorporated — for the first time in Texas — a comprehensive development agreement. This allows many aspects of the project such as right-of-way acquisition, design and construction to be done simultaneously.

With work under way on this \$3.6 billion project, Daigh now oversees the construction in his newest job with the department — Austin district engineer.

■ See Awards, Page 14

# Awards at Short Course hail achievements

Continued from Page 13

## DeBERRY AWARD

Frances S. Willison, P.E., has a hand in almost every major project in the Houston District. A Point Comfort native and honors graduate of the University of Houston, she started with TxDOT 23 years ago in the Houston District's Northwest Area Office.

Willison works on a variety of issues, including utility relocation, highway beautification, underground storage tank remediation, mapping and surveying. During the past 10 years, she has been responsible for the acquisition of more than 3,000 parcels of land, allowing some \$7 billion in construction projects to move forward.

Lately, she has been busy scrutinizing and questioning every foot of a 20-mile freeway project. At stake is more than \$305 million in total expenditures for right of way.

Throughout the complex process, she has remained focused on the objective: protect property owners and taxpayers without delaying much-needed transportation improvements.

Thanks to her leadership in clearing the way, the billion-dollar reconstruction of the Katy Freeway in Houston began this year.

## PERRY AWARD

Audrey Daniels Kariel knows the importance of transportation — past, present and future. A Northeast Texas native, this former elected official has been a principal leader in her community as she promotes transportation improvements.

Also a winner of TxDOT's Road Hand Award, Kariel champions highway projects, railroad issues, and public transportation, along with enhancement projects that restore and preserve transportation history.

As a city commissioner and mayor in Marshall, Kariel provided a key leadership role in planning and promoting numerous highway projects, including the extension of a major state highway and a much-needed relief route for trucks and other traffic.

As mayor, she initiated the request for federal funds to upgrade the city's downtown square. Because of her efforts, access to the area will be improved, historic brick streets will be repaired, and pedestrian lighting and landscaping will be provided.

Visitors to Marshall can relive history at the railroad museum she labored to create in an old railroad depot. Originally built in 1912, this multi-use facility also serves as a waiting area for Amtrak's Texas Eagle.

She has served on many professional and civic organizations, including the Transportation and Communications Committee of the National League

of Cities and a subcommittee for the East Texas Council of Governments. She chairs the Marshall Chamber of Commerce Transportation Committee.

In 2002, Lt. Gov. Bill Ratliff appointed her to the State Public Transportation Advisory Committee.

## STOTZER AWARD

Barrie D. Cogburn of the TxDOT Design Division is known for her persistence and for her ability to create partnerships. She has helped make TxDOT a national leader in innovative roadside maintenance.

Born in Midland, she is a graduate of Texas A&M University. She has developed partnerships that have led to environmental, economic and performance benefits based on better and smarter maintenance procedures.

She joined TxDOT 17 years ago. More than half of her career to date was in the Austin District where she gained a reputation for making area highways more beautiful.

Once she moved to the Design Division, her experience was put to work battling the frustrating, costly and environmentally challenging task of establishing vegetation on roadway maintenance and construction projects.

Teaming with staff from the state's environmental commission, she researched, developed and implemented an award-winning compost program. The program uses recycled material (in the form of compost) to prevent erosion and reduce maintenance along state highways.

Knowing that merely developing the program was not enough — it had to be put to use — she organized demonstrations for districts around the state. She sought out the most difficult situations to prove the benefits of the compost program.

Working with TxDOT employees and contractors, Cogburn demonstrated the benefits of compost, including more rapid establishment of vegetation, erosion control, and water saving.

A landscape architect, she chaired a committee of area engineers and construction personnel to develop a statewide specification, making TxDOT one of the first with a compost-use specification.

The partnership she fostered with the state environmental commission led to the development of a compost incentive program, funded by a \$1 million federal grant. It represents the largest Clean Water Act grant ever approved by the Environmental Protection Agency. The success of the incentive program led the federal agency to extend the grant, adding \$1 million to the program.

The result: TxDOT is enhancing the environment, improving water quality, creating a market for unwanted organic waste, and saving the state time and money on roadside maintenance. ☺





**Beaumont District's Billy Clopton**



**Roberta Ann Jones-Ballard, Human Resources Division**

# Above and beyond the call...

**by Tim Cunningham**  
Associate Editor

**T**he TxDOT Extra Mile Award recognizes individual employees who have shown extraordinary courage. They have put their own lives in danger acting to save the life of another or to prevent injury. As part of the opening ceremonies at the 2003 Transportation Short Course in mid-October, TxDOT honored 11 employees with the Extra Mile Award.

Executive Director Mike Behrens, presenting the awards, said, "Each of them, during the past

several months, went the extra mile to save a life. In the process, their own lives sometimes were on the line. Each of them is a hero. We are proud today to be in their presence."

More than 130 employees have received the award since the recognition program began in 1983.

## **HUMAN RESOURCES**

### **Roberta Ann Jones-Ballard**

On May 21, heading home from work, Jones-Ballard rolled up on the scene of an accident. It was bad. A wrecked pickup truck blocked one lane — its driver lying on the pavement after being thrown from the vehicle. Flames shot from a crumpled van on the side of the road. While other motorists helped those

in the van, she heard the cries of children coming from the pickup.

Jones-Ballard is a human resources specialist with TxDOT's Human Resources Division in Austin. She has been with TxDOT going on 11 years.

Although she could see fire shooting around the front end of the pickup, she approached the burning vehicle and found two children in the cab — a little girl about six years old with a large bump on her head, and a one-year-old boy still strapped in a car seat. Acting quickly, she removed the girl and carried her to safety. With the truck still ablaze, she returned to the pickup for the boy.

■ **See Extra Mile, Page 16**

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**TxDOT photos by  
Geoff Appold**

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Continued from Page 15

Unable to release the restraints of the child-safety seat, she looked for another way to extricate the child. With the fire continuing to grow, she was able at last to slide the boy out from the confining straps. She did this without stopping to think that she could be in danger from the fire; her only concern was getting the children to safety. Without doubt, her quick thinking and concern for the lives of the children saved them from injury or death.

### **BEAUMONT DISTRICT**

#### **Billy Clopton**

On May 23, 2002, while hauling materials for some shoulder work along State Highway 87 near Sabine Pass, Clopton saw two women fishing along the bank. Luckily, he saw something else — an unusually large wall of water moving down the bank toward the women. It was a wave from an oil tanker's bow.

Clopton operates heavy equipment with the Port Arthur Maintenance Office in the Beaumont District. He has been with TxDOT for nearly 30 years.

The water washed over the women's nearby car, engulfing one of the women. Clopton ran to her, grabbed her hand, and tried to pull her out. Having difficulty lifting the woman out of the water, he realized that her foot was caught in a tangled web of submerged tree limbs and roots. All he could manage to do was to get her head above the water. Unfortunately, their situation was soon to get worse. A second wave raced toward them.

Trying to calm the frightened woman and assuring her that they were going to make it, Clopton held on as the wall of water approached. He tried to hold the woman's head above the water, but the wave hit with no mercy, pushing both of them under.

As Clopton worked to get him-

self and the woman above the choppy waters, co-worker Pat Letulle jumped in and helped Clopton untangle the trapped woman and pull her to shore.

With the drenched woman safe, both TxDOT workers assisted emergency workers called to the scene by a third TxDOT employee, Jon Clark.

### **SAN ANTONIO DISTRICT**

**Jose Luis Aguilar  
Samuel Martinez  
Gil Romo Jr.  
Romeo Ramirez**

On July 1, 2002, record-breaking rain in the San Antonio area triggered flash floods across a wide area of Central Texas. The heavy rain swamped Interstate 35 near Dilley, about 70 miles south of San Antonio. In two separate incidents, these four saved the lives of six people, including two small children.

The four men work out of the Pearsall Maintenance Office of the San Antonio District. Romo is a maintenance technician who has been with TxDOT four years. Aguilar is a maintenance technician who has been with TxDOT three years. Martinez is an engineering technician and has been with

TxDOT almost 20 years. Ramirez is a maintenance technician and has been with TxDOT five years.

In the first instance, Romo and Aguilar saw a motorist stranded on I-35 in high, fast-moving water. Water was almost up to the window of the vehicle. Aguilar, acting quickly, climbed onto the top of the state truck to be in a better position to act. Romo then slowly pulled the state truck alongside the stranded vehicle.

The two immediately realized that the driver could not open the car's window due to the swiftly running water. With Aguilar on top of the truck and Romo working from the driver's seat, both men used all their strength to force the window down. It was only then that they were able to pull the panicked driver to safety.

The rescue came hardly a moment too soon, because shortly after the two heroes retreated to higher ground with the stranded motorist, the vehicle was swept away by the muddy floodwater.

In the second instance, Martinez and Ramirez were in the right place at the right time. They were surveying the flooded roadways in their

■ See Extra Mile, Page 17



**San Antonio District recipients, from left: Samuel Martinez, Romeo Ramirez, Gil Romo Jr., and Jose Luis Aguilar.**

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## Extra Mile Award

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Continued from Page 16

area when they realized that five people were stranded in a vehicle trapped in rushing water almost three-feet high.

The driver was waving frantically — desperate to get someone's attention and to reach dry ground. Trapped in the vehicle was an elderly man with a heart condition, two women, one of them disabled, and two children both under the age of three.

Martinez — thinking of his own three kids — knew he and his partner had to do something. He carefully maneuvered the TxDOT truck through the treacherous water and alongside the stranded vehicle.

Ramirez cautiously exited the truck and helped each of the three adults get out of the vehicle and to safety. Martinez then returned to the vehicle and carried both children to safety.

### PHARR DISTRICT

Ralph Almanza  
Fernando Chapa  
Cesar Guiza

On Sept. 12, while working near U.S. 83, the three employees heard the impact of a collision and rushed to the scene. Upon arrival, they found a large garbage truck upside down on the median barrier of the high-volume, high-speed expressway. The truck had flipped over — spilling most of its load on the mainlanes. Rushing to the cab of the truck, this quick-acting crew found the driver trapped inside — hot hydraulic fluid dripping on him.

Almanza is a transportation technician in the Pharr District, along with Guiza, who is a transportation maintenance technician. Both have been with TxDOT since February of this year. Chapa is a transportation maintenance technician and a 21-year veteran.

Realizing that the heavy traffic posed an additional threat to the safety of both the driver and res-



**Pharr District recipients, from left:  
Ralph Almanza, Cesar Guiza and Fernando Chapa**



**Dallas District recipients, from left:  
Matthew R. Morrow and Raymond A. Schmidt.**

cuers, Guiza immediately began redirecting motorists.

Almanza and Chapa began to help the driver, aiming to remove him from the hazardous situation. Chapa quickly covered the man with his raincoat, protecting him from the hydraulic fluid. The two then broke out the truck's windshield and carefully pulled the driver from the crushed cab, moving him to a protected location to await an ambulance.

### DALLAS DISTRICT

Matthew R. Morrow  
Raymond A. Schmidt

On March 24, Morrow saw a large truck stalled in the median of Interstate 45. Most people might just have driven by without stopping, but the TxDOT employee stopped to see if he could assist with any problem the motorist might be facing. When Morrow

■ See Extra Mile, Page 21





## **TxDOT Roundup**

### **BARTON HEADS TO BEAUMONT**

John A. Barton has been appointed Beaumont district engineer, effective Dec. 1. He fills the position held by Walter O. Crook, who retired Aug. 31.

Barton had been director of transportation planning and development for the Wichita Falls District. In 2001, he established the Cross Plains Rural Transportation Council, a rural planning organization to enhance the district's public involvement activities. As a result, public participation at meetings increased more than 500 percent. This effort won recent recognition from the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials. Barton also received the 1996 Journey Toward Excellence Award.

He began his career in the Wichita Falls District working as a summer hire in Archer City from 1980 to 1983. He graduated in 1986 with honors from Texas A&M University with a bachelor's degree in civil engineering.

### **WOOD SUCCEEDS TRAWEEK**

Bryan Alan Wood was named Bryan district engineer effective Dec. 1. He replaces Lonny G. Traweek. Wood previously served as deputy district engineer for the Corpus Christi District, a position he had held since July 2000. Among his achievements was the reorganization of the district's Port Aransas ferry operations and the development and implementation of the district's hurricane evacuation plans. In addition, he oversaw a feasibility study for the \$250 million project to replace the harbor bridge.

Bryan began his TxDOT career in the Bridge Division in 1983 as an engineering assistant. He received a bachelor's degree in architectural engineering in 1983 and a master's degree in civil engineering in 1997, both from the University of Texas.

### **GREGORCYK MOVES UP**

Lonnie J. Gregorcyk became Yoakum district engineer effective Dec. 1, filling the position held by Bruce Bayless, who retired Aug. 31.

Gregorcyk served as interim district engineer and as the director of transportation planning and development for the district prior to his appointment as DE.

Gregorcyk began his TxDOT career in the Yoakum District in 1984 as an engineer assistant in Victoria. He has served as a technical advisor on the Victoria Metropolitan Planning Organization. He is also a member of the Interstate 69 Technical Advisory Committee. He graduated from Texas A&M University with a bachelor's degree in civil engineering in 1984.

### **LITTLEFIELD HEADS PARIS**

Bobby G. Littlefield Jr. is the new Paris district engineer, effective Dec. 1. He fills the position held by James G. Freeman, who retired Aug. 31.

Recipient of the 2003 Dewitt C. Greer Award, Littlefield had been serving as area engineer in the district's Sherman office. Accomplishments include completion of the relocated U.S. 82 and replacement of an historic truss bridge over the Red River.

He also oversaw implementation of the first "Super 2" design sections in the district, which added intermittent passing lanes on SH 121 to relieve commuter congestion. In his new post, he will continue involvement on the largest contract ever awarded in the Paris District — reconstruction of U.S. 75 in southern Grayson County.

Littlefield has worked exclusively in the Paris District during his 19-year career at TxDOT. A 1984 civil engineering graduate of Texas A&M University, he is a member and past president of the Grayson County Rotary Club.

### **CASTEEL TO SAN ANTONIO**

David B. Casteel has been appointed San Antonio district engineer effective Nov. 1, replacing John Kelly, who retired Aug. 31.

Casteel had served as district engineer for the Corpus Christi District since 2001. In 1997 he was named district engineer in Childress. His accomplishments include helping to develop the Texas Metropolitan Mobility Plan, participation in the development of the "Super 2" design, and completion of major construction projects in several areas of the state.

He began his TxDOT career in 1983 as a summer employee in the Graham Area Office in the Wichita Falls District. Casteel earned bachelor's and master's degrees in civil engineering from Texas A&M University. He has served on the policy board of two metropolitan planning organizations and on a Transportation Research Board committee to synthesize design exception practices. He was named Lion of the Year in Childress and received recognition from the Corpus Christi Regional Transportation Authority and Beautify Corpus Christi.

### **HALE MOVES TO DALLAS**

William (Bill) L. Hale was named Dallas district engineer effective Nov. 1, replacing Jay Nelson.

Hale had been district engineer for the Abilene District since 1999. His achievements include reorganization of the district office to emphasize construction, maintenance and transportation operations. He received the 1996 Luther DeBerry Award.

Hale began his TxDOT career in the Dallas District in 1983 as a resident engineer in training for the Ellis County Area Office. He received his graduate degree in civil

■ See Roundup, Page 19

# Childress, Amarillo districts take top Rodeo honors

by Maggie Rios

San Antonio Public Information Office

Two of the best drivers from each district came from across Texas to the Bexar Metro yard in San Antonio Oct. 30 in a competition



TxDOT photo by Maggie Rios

**Monte Elliott, Childress District, brings his truck's bumper to within 1/8 inch of the stop line. The Stop Line tests the driver's ability to judge the position of the front bumper with respect to a line on the pavement and a stop sign located to the driver's right.**

designed to show off and test their best driving skills.

Under the watchful eye of judges, drivers first inspected a 10-yard dump truck and tried to find all its defects. The objective: to test the driver's ability to check for safety and mechanical defects on a vehicle as would be done during a normal pre-trip inspection. While the defects may appear simple to spot, it gets complicated when the defects are unknown and the clock is running. Here are the ten defects they had to find:

- Glad-hand seal, right side cut (connect the trailer brakes to the truck)
- Mud flap, shorter than 8 inches to ground
- Passenger side bed clearance light out
- Horn inoperable
- Tailgate safety pin missing
- License plate light out
- Low steering fluid
- Loose lug nut, right rear
- Tailgate, latch loose

■ Back-up alarm inoperable

As family members, co-workers and judges watched, each driver then maneuvered through the driving portion of the Rodeo. This included six driving exercises: Straight Line, Alley Dock, Offset Alley, Serpentine, Diminishing Clearance and Stop Line. Judges closely monitored each movement and scored the event. Each of these exercises highlighted a different truck-handling or driving skill.

The Alley Dock, for example, tests the driver's ability to back a vehicle into a narrow space and stop with the rear of the vehicle within six inches using only the mirrors for guidance.

When the dust settled, Lee Dhone from the Childress District walked away in first place with a score of 345 out of a possible 350. second place winner was Melvin Hammer, Amarillo District, who netted 320 points. ★

## TxDOT Roundup

Continued from Page 18

engineering in 1989 from the University of Texas at Arlington and was adjunct faculty at the University of Texas at Arlington for six years, teaching a graduate course in pavement design.

### LEADERSHIP TEXAS

Karen Baker, P.E., and Patricia A. Jackson, P.E., have been selected by the Foundation for Women's Resources for participation in the 2004 Leadership Texas program.

Leadership Texas focuses on outstanding women employees who are leaders in their communities and profession.

Baker, who has 20 years with TxDOT, is the Montgomery area

engineer for the Houston District. She addresses mobility issues and is responsible for design, construction and maintenance in one of the nation's fastest-growing counties.

Jackson, with 14 years in TxDOT, is a transportation engineer for the Design Division. She coordinates project development and processing of plans, specifications and estimates between four TxDOT districts, divisions, and offices, the Federal Highway Administration, and several other governmental agencies.

### LEARNING SYSTEM TESTING

The TxDOT project to implement a learning-content management system is advancing. A preliminary version of the system is being tested at TxDOT and involves a

pilot-test group and existing training courses. The system aims to use computer technology to make learning among TxDOT employees faster and more effective.

Project manager Janet Green, of TxDOT's Human Resources Department, says the next step will see more users and courses added to the system. An interface with PeopleSoft software then will be built to transfer data to an individual employee's training record. TxDOT uses the PeopleSoft program to manage data on employees.

The Training, Quality and Development Section of TxDOT's Human Resources Division has undertaken selection, testing, evaluation and use of the system. With it, the depart-

■ See Roundup, Page 23



## Service Awards

### 35 years

Don L. Lunday – Abilene  
Paul M. Goertz – Austin  
Wilbert W. Riewe – Houston  
George L. Humphrey – Tyler  
Jerry L. Dike – Vehicle Titles & Registration

### 30 years

Myron L. McKelvey – Austin  
Robert T. McFadden – Beaumont  
Patricia L. Molina – El Paso  
Glenn E. Elliott – Fort Worth  
Johnnie W. Clary – Lubbock  
Robert L. Faver – Lufkin  
Arnulfo T. Garcia – San Antonio  
Carolyn A. Thompson – Waco  
Curtis M. Wagner – Motor Carrier  
Patricia R. Batiste – Vehicle Titles & Registration

### 25 years

David C. Caffey – Abilene  
Anita A. Linger – Amarillo  
Samuel E. Holland – Austin  
Espirio J. Puga – Austin  
Gene C. Rice – Austin  
David A. Till – Austin  
Ben A. MacKey – Brownwood  
Jesus B. Lopez Jr. – Corpus Christi  
Thomas R. Mangrem – El Paso  
Ahe W. Crayton – Fort Worth  
Jose P. Esquivel Jr. – Fort Worth  
William H. Lasater Jr. – Fort Worth  
Allen Clark III – Houston  
Cynthia S. Sauer – Houston  
Judy P. Skidmore – Houston  
Frieda L. Smith – Houston  
Rodolfo Amesquita Jr. – Laredo  
Tracy L. Cumby – Lubbock  
Stanley C. Roberts – Paris  
Gustavo O. Lopez – Pharr  
Gilbert Limon – San Antonio  
Edward K. Schmidt – San Antonio  
Terry G. Frick – Tyler  
Curtis W. Hefelfinger – Waco  
Diana P. Martinez – Yoakum  
Delia C. Hernandez – Administration  
Barbara H. McCain – Construction  
Barbara B. Bates – Vehicle Titles & Registration  
Mary H. Davenport – Vehicle Titles & Registration  
Patricia C. Gunn – Vehicle Titles & Registration

### 20 years

Ira G. Wisinger – Atlanta  
Paul D. Michalk – Austin  
Warren D. Brown – Brownwood  
Michael M. Greig – Bryan  
Alford Hardwick – Bryan  
Pablo Mendez – Bryan  
Jeffery S. Cagle – Childress  
Micheal T. Doss – Childress  
Carlos M. Armadillo – Corpus Christi  
Grace L. Greenlee – Corpus Christi  
Ruben G. Lopez – Corpus Christi  
Robert M. Brown – Dallas  
Migelo Galindo – Fort Worth  
Harold G. Hall – Fort Worth  
Cathy B. Wood – Fort Worth  
Sharon L. Edwards – Houston  
Gerald G. Foster – Houston  
Michael R. Tello – Houston  
Roxanne P. Willey – Houston  
Theresa D. Wilson – Houston  
Kyle D. Hill – Lubbock  
Carol E. Jackson – Lubbock  
Oscar D. Sedgwick Jr. – Lubbock  
Rhonda K. Smith – Lubbock  
Hector Flores – Odessa  
Steven D. Plowman – San Angelo  
Joe L. Espinoza – San Antonio  
Judith L. Friesenhahn – San Antonio  
Matias H. Galvan – San Antonio

Rene V. Martinez – San Antonio  
Odis M. Cates – Tyler  
Millard C. Martin – Tyler  
Stanley L. Rushing – Tyler  
Louis K. Sanders – Tyler  
James M. Black – Wichita Falls  
Timothy S. Weber – Wichita Falls  
Ernest D. Aleman – Yoakum  
Guadalupe Gomez Jr. – Yoakum  
Rodney G. Strait – Yoakum  
Charles H. Nail Jr. – Vehicle Titles & Registration

### 15 years

David L. Seago – Abilene  
Ernesto Garza Jr. – Amarillo  
Tommy B. Lane – Amarillo  
Jerry R. Wooldridge – Amarillo  
Gregory A. Frazier – Atlanta  
Kenneth R. Stephens Sr. – Beaumont  
Larry D. Skaggs – Brownwood  
Maurice Maness – Bryan  
Rodney D. Chessier – Corpus Christi  
Miguel A. Flores – Corpus Christi  
Stephen B. Meacham – Corpus Christi  
Shannon R. Corder – Dallas  
Rodney Douglas – Dallas  
William D. Grooms – Dallas  
Verlin G. Reynolds – Dallas  
Jeanne E. Roddy – Dallas  
Larry D. Shumate – Dallas  
Roman Gonzalez – El Paso  
Hector J. Granados – El Paso  
Jerry L. Springfield – El Paso  
Rafael Garza Jr. – Fort Worth  
Robert E. Macik Jr. – Fort Worth  
John R. Tillinghast – Fort Worth  
Alexander J. Burgos – Houston  
Joe P. Cornett – Houston  
James V. Hinkle – Houston  
Brenda J. Jenkins – Houston  
Kenneth L. Kimmy Jr. – Houston  
An T. Le – Houston  
Alan D. Moreau Jr. – Houston  
Shady Parsa – Houston  
Manuel S. Rodriguez Jr. – Houston  
Troy D. Shelly – Houston  
Richard Turner III – Houston  
Martin A. Galvan – Laredo  
Augustin Martinez – Laredo  
Eloy C. Zertuche – Laredo  
Mark E. Jeffrey – Lufkin  
Kendall B. Raymond – Lufkin  
Richard B. Floyd – Paris  
James B. Hutchison III – Paris  
Danny E. Womack – Paris  
Abel Corona Jr. – Pharr  
Erlath E. Engelhardt – San Antonio  
Manuel D. Tovar – San Antonio  
William E. Fletcher – Tyler  
Rex Neill – Tyler  
Randall S. Berger – Yoakum  
William J. Eisman – Yoakum  
Barbara C. Maxey – Yoakum  
Sandra E. Gaither – Aviation  
Sheila K. Craven – Finance  
Debra J. Lajoie – Information Systems  
Sandra F. Cox – Motor Carrier  
Robert C. Bernhard – Right of Way  
Patrick J. Worsham – Traffic Operations  
Michael G. Lloyd – Transportation Planning & Programming  
Jose Sermino Jr. – Travel

Keith K. Schneider – Austin  
Gwen C. Stockbridge – Austin  
Donna L. Phillips – Beaumont  
Kedrick A. Williams – Beaumont  
Rojelio H. Bonilla – Brownwood  
Refugio Benavidez – Childress  
Jimmy Hinojosa – Childress  
Presliano G. Rocha – Childress  
Ray C. Shrubs – Childress  
Matilde Dimas – Corpus Christi  
Wilson W. Harkins – Corpus Christi  
James F. Higginbotham Jr. – Dallas  
Patricia A. Jandrew – Dallas  
Frank L. Jett – Dallas  
David N. Joubert – Dallas  
Joyce A. Lathan – Dallas  
John P. Marshall – Dallas  
James M. Shaw II – Dallas  
Monica C. Dubrule – El Paso  
Charles E. Webster – El Paso  
Cynthia G. Baldrige – Fort Worth  
Anthony D. Huggins – Fort Worth  
Johnny L. Lehmann – Fort Worth  
Clyde J. Alexander – Houston  
Melvin D. Kennard – Houston  
James A. Carter Jr. – Houston  
Lucia L. Galvan – Houston  
Jody D. MacKlin – Houston  
Larry R. Whittington – Houston  
Jose L. Franco III – Laredo  
James K. Edwards – Lubbock  
Hoy J. Clark Jr. – Lubbock  
Edward W. Faires – Lufkin  
Douglas B. Huss – Lufkin  
Archie R. Phillips – Lufkin  
Troy M. Vaughn – Lufkin  
Randy L. West – Lufkin  
Rita C. Clay – Odessa  
Bobby M. Contreras – Odessa  
Kathryn L. Rauscher – Odessa  
Hector V. Salmon – Odessa  
Steven R. Taylor – Paris  
Gloria Borrego – Pharr  
Sandra Flores – Pharr  
David S. Jenkins – Pharr  
Miguel Rodriguez – Pharr  
Maricela P. Salinas – Pharr  
Sandra M. Mach – San Angelo  
Roy M. Allbritton – San Antonio  
Frank C. Brown – San Antonio  
Michael W. Crow – San Antonio  
Eduardo Reyes – San Antonio  
James A. Samford – San Antonio  
Roland Sanchez – San Antonio  
Richard Torres – San Antonio  
Michael G. Wood – San Antonio  
Clinton R. Corley – Tyler  
Jaime S. Martinez – Tyler  
Jeanine G. Haberman – Waco  
Timothy E. Meeks v Waco  
Samuel T. Nowaski – Waco  
Kim L. Pfeiffer – Waco  
Maurizio R. Boucher – Wichita Falls  
Gary L. Croucher – Wichita Falls  
Cory W. Holzer – Wichita Falls  
Alvin W. Horton – Wichita Falls  
Enrique P. Martinez – Wichita Falls  
Weldon D. Moore – Wichita Falls  
Cosme Solis III – Wichita Falls  
Emery L. Mascheck – Yoakum  
Mark A. Melnar v Yoakum  
Adolph R. Novosad Jr. – Yoakum  
Kenneth E. Wicks – Yoakum  
Gregory S. Cleveland – Construction  
Elizabeth F. Rice – Design  
Paul O. Cortinas – General Services  
Byron L. Jones – General Services  
Ricky D. Griles – General Services  
Veronica Tijerina – General Services  
John R. Hofmann – Human Resources  
Janet H. O'Shea – Human Resources



## Service Awards

Tommy M. Roy – Human Resources  
Gary F. Grose – Information Systems  
Ernest R. Dones – Maintenance  
Mary E. Anderson – Motor Carrier  
Erika M. Collins – Motor Vehicle  
Rachel S. Robbins – Motor Vehicle  
Noel C. Didear – Transportation Planning & Programming

### 5 years

Robert H. Hanson – Abilene  
Michael G. Moreno – Abilene  
Timothy W. Roswell – Abilene  
Maurice D. Ferguson – Amarillo  
Cody S. Mixon – Amarillo  
Tracy W. Muno – Amarillo  
Kenneth J. Peeks – Amarillo  
Carl R. Simpson – Amarillo  
Earl H. Westbrook – Amarillo  
David L. Gardner – Atlanta  
Harold W. Buchhorn – Austin  
Charles K. Davidson – Austin  
Robert E. Garza – Austin  
John C. Peters – Austin  
Carmelo C. Reyes – Austin  
Billy R. Brown – Beaumont  
Marida M. Chaisson – Beaumont  
Jared A. Browder – Brownwood  
Jesse Cardoza – Brownwood  
Raul A. Fung – Bryan  
Michael A. Hancock – Bryan  
Dena T. Richie – Bryan  
Brenda A. Taylor – Bryan  
Bobby Kautz – Childress  
Norman W. Thompson – Childress  
Richard Bellows – Corpus Christi  
Jimmie B. Beltran – Corpus Christi  
Christopher R. Castellano – Corpus Christi  
Linda Guartuche – Corpus Christi  
Michael L. Sifuentes – Corpus Christi  
Armandina Aldrete – Dallas  
Homayoon M. Asgari – Dallas  
Polita C. Flemming – Dallas  
Daniela Frazier – Dallas  
Robert A. Havens – Dallas  
John R. Hutto Jr. – Dallas  
Chia Jong F. Li – Dallas  
Ruben Gonzalez – El Paso  
Victor M. Hernandez – El Paso  
Carol M. Hughey – El Paso  
Raymond L. Avant – Fort Worth  
James R. Burks Jr. – Fort Worth  
Stafford B. Davis – Fort Worth  
Rubane Diaz – Fort Worth  
John S. Elders – Fort Worth  
William C. Febinger IV – Fort Worth  
Lindell Hale – Fort Worth  
Thomas D. Hickey – Fort Worth  
Robert L. Hill – Fort Worth  
Lance D. Jobe – Fort Worth  
Larry E. Mayberry – Fort Worth  
Mickey M. Meacham – Fort Worth  
Teddy R. Phillips – Fort Worth  
Kalvin W. Radford – Fort Worth  
Jody G. Richards – Fort Worth  
Jose G. Salazar – Fort Worth  
Stephen C. Wade – Fort Worth  
Christen A. Eschberger – Houston  
Kenneth W. Friedell – Houston  
Earnest G. Gatson – Houston  
Brenda J. Hynum – Houston  
Ahmad Javan – Houston  
Kennon W. Johnson – Houston  
Jason R. Kinney – Houston  
Jayantha Lorensuhewa – Houston  
Cesar E. Sanchez – Houston  
Tiffany A. Tryner – Houston  
James H. Exum Jr. – Lubbock

Clarence J. Kube – Lubbock  
Sammy N. Welch – Lubbock  
Jennifer H. Adams – Lufkin  
Scott Benavidez – Odessa  
Miguel A. Marmolejo Jr. – Odessa  
Nancy L. Anderson – Paris  
Joel A. Blackwell – Paris  
David A. Blanton – Paris  
Earnest E. Booth – Paris  
Danny C. Brown – Paris  
Marvin W. Gibson – Paris  
Aaron H. Hughes Sr. – Paris  
Billy W. Lockett – Paris  
Daniel J. Perry – Paris  
Michael W. Petty – Paris  
Jason S. Shannon – Paris  
Rock L. Thurston – Paris  
Kelly W. Titsworth – Paris  
Jasson Caltzontzint – Pharr  
Roxanna Mancha – Pharr  
Ruby Martinez – Pharr  
Elsa I. Morfin-ibarra – Pharr  
Valente Olivarez Jr. – Pharr  
Marcos R. Salinas – Pharr  
Pedro Segundo – Pharr  
Oscar R. Anderson – San Angelo  
Suzanne M. Bahm – San Angelo  
Daniel G. Davenport – San Angelo  
Darren W. Everett – San Angelo  
Gary T. Maricle – San Angelo  
Roger L. Meacham – San Angelo  
Noah J. Moore IV – San Angelo  
Wanda J. Stewart – San Angelo  
Salvatore Bernardino – San Antonio  
Sandra J. Castillo – San Antonio  
Ronald E. Holtz – San Antonio  
Wilfred G. Jaimes – San Antonio  
Gabriel G. Lopez – San Antonio  
Joseph M. Meneley – San Antonio  
Kori L. Rader – San Antonio  
Richard J. Tobolka – San Antonio  
Rebecca S. Berry – Tyler  
Jerry D. Hodge – Tyler  
Randall C. Smith – Tyler  
Kenneth R. Roberts – Waco  
Billy R. Byers – Wichita Falls  
John B. Coats – Wichita Falls  
William H. Council – Wichita Falls  
Adele M. Lewis – Wichita Falls  
Miles W. Roberts – Wichita Falls  
Randy A. Sumpter – Wichita Falls  
Terri J. Hollon – Bridge  
Robert D. Owens – Construction  
Julie A. Stanford – Construction  
David L. Gonzalez – General Services  
Richard A. Bochantin – Information Systems  
Jose A. Castillo – Information Systems  
Albert Corrales Jr. – Information Systems  
Dingmin Min – Information Systems  
Joseph T. Mitchell – Information Systems  
Min Wang – Information Systems  
Manuela A. Ortiz – International Relations  
Thomas R. Barrett – Maintenance  
Kenneth L. Newman – Maintenance  
Bob Van Ermel Scherer – Maintenance  
Robert L. Martinez – Motor Carrier  
David L. Clem – Motor Vehicle  
Norma J. Snyder – Motor Vehicle  
Gloria D. Smith – Public Transportation  
Charles M. Brindell – Traffic Operations  
Norma L. Schwartz – Travel  
Roxann M. Feeler – Vehicle Titles & Registration  
Tammie S. Gazda – Vehicle Titles & Registration  
Jose Lopez Jr. – Vehicle Titles & Registration  
Leobeth O. King – Vehicle Titles & Registration  
Jonnie L. Marton – Vehicle Titles & Registration  
Brenda L. Smith – Vehicle Titles & Registration  
Robert F. Wohler Jr. – Vehicle Titles & Registration

## Extra Mile Award

Continued from Page 17

approached, he realized that the driver was in serious need of medical attention and used his cell phone to call 9-1-1.

Morrow then pulled the unconscious driver from the truck and determined he was not breathing and did not have a pulse. With help from Schmidt, who also had come to the scene, Morrow began CPR on the victim. The CPR did not restore the man's breathing — but it kept his blood circulating until the ambulance arrived.

Morrow is a survey party chief in the Southeast Dallas County Area Office of the Dallas District and has been with TxDOT 13 years. Schmidt is an assistant maintenance supervisor in the same office in Hutchins, Texas, and has been with TxDOT for 19 years.

Paramedics were able to restore the patient's breathing while en route to the hospital. But this TxDOT twosome trained in CPR saved his life because they had maintained his blood flow. After recovering from his injuries, the truck driver stopped by the Area Office to thank his two heroes. ★

## Sneak Preview

Coming next month in  
Transportation News





## Mail Drop

### LUBBOCK DISTRICT

**From:** Greg & Dot Keys  
Midland, Texas

This letter is to commend your employee, **Kerry Turner**, for a very nice deed he performed for us. My wife and I recently were returning to Midland from Lubbock when we had a blowout of one of our tires.

We had no sooner stopped and started trying to figure out how to work the jack when Mr. Turner stopped and immediately took over the changing of our flat tire.

He very quickly completed the entire procedure in a very friendly and most-courteous manner. In so doing, he saved me from much effort, and gave both my wife and me a very good and positive feeling about the entire situation.

Mr. Turner would appear to be an excellent example of the type of employee every organization is striving for. He certainly ranks high in our estimation.

*(Kerry Turner is a maintenance technician in Lamesa.)*



### AUSTIN DISTRICT

**From:** Linda Wentreck  
Taylor Economic  
Development Corp.  
Taylor, Texas

It is hard to put into words the appreciation that Taylor feels for the landscaping grants awarded to us in 1999 and 2002 by Keep Texas Beautiful and the Texas Department of Transportation.

I'm sure you've seen the beautiful landscaping in downtown Taylor that was done by TxDOT as a result of Taylor winning the 1999 Governor's Community Achievement Award (GCAA). Every day I get to see and enjoy the lovely plants, trees, and planters that have helped to beautify downtown Taylor. Thank you for helping to make this happen. Thank you also for having such very competent and caring people on your staff.

**Kerry Blackmon** must be one of

your most-valued employees. I served as the 1999 GCAA chairman and was privileged to work with him on that project. I know that working with our community must have been an exercise in patience at times, but one would never have known it by the way Mr. Blackmon responded to us. He was always understanding, knowledgeable, and garnered popularity with everyone who met him.

His response to questions was always immediate and easy to understand. His commitment to giving us the most for our money was evident. Through his abilities and creativity, we have a "Taylor-made" landscape design that far exceeded our expectations.

Mr. Blackmon took a rather dismal — yet heavily traveled section of our city, and brought beauty to what was once a concrete jungle. The result of his work is a credit to our town and to our state.

We are bursting with pride because Taylor again won a GCAA last year. The 2002 GCAA chairman has nothing but good things to say about Kerry as they now work on the current project. Thank you so much for allowing him the time to help our community grow and prosper.

*(Kerry Blackmon is a landscape architect in the Austin District.)*



### EL PASO DISTRICT

**From:** Joi P Smith  
Abilene, Texas

I was driving on Interstate 10 West when — 93 miles outside El Paso — the check-engine light on my car came on. I had just taken the car from the El Paso dealer who had put in a new engine. To prevent voiding any warranty on the work or engine, I pulled over. My cell phone was out of service and vehicles just flew by me. Being alone in the desert, I was frightened, to say the least. Seeing a white truck with yellow lights coming toward me, I waved down the driver, who stopped.

The driver was **Francisco Marez**. He allowed me to use his personal cell

phone to call the dealer (even though it was in analog roaming, causing him personal expense).

The dealer requested the oil be checked, which Francisco did. Finding the reading low, I was told to put oil in the car. Francisco drove me the 10 miles back to the service station and then back to the car, carrying the oil and putting in the oil.

He then followed me the 10 miles to the nearest exit ramp, checked the oil again and very calmly said he thought my car would be fine. He was so very calm and reassuring through the entire ordeal. He then said to try another 10 miles and see if the oil level stayed and if the light came on. We did and, again, the car was fine.

Still sensing my insecurity due to the length of the trip ahead of me, he offered to drive with me another 40 miles. He drove the 40 miles to the Kent exit, checked my oil and, with yet more reassuring calmness, said he believed I and my car would be OK.

I did ask him if he needed to call his supervisors, or if I should, to verify his whereabouts. He said it was a normal part of an employee's job to help stranded motorists.

He certainly would have made his parents proud that day and TxDOT is very lucky to have this young man represent it.

*(Editor's note: Francisco Marez is an engineering assistant in the district's East Area Office.)*



### PHARR DISTRICT

**From:** Ann Suhr  
Laguna Vista, Texas

Recently, a large number of the roads in Cameron County were resurfaced — with little or no inconvenience to citizens using the roads.

I think your department is to be commended.

I use Highway 100 from Laguna Vista into Port Isabel almost daily, and I never had a delay or detour — just warning signs.

I think we all owe you a debt of gratitude.

## Exit Ramp

### September 2003

#### Atlanta District

Martin W. Loyd  
Construction Inspector  
29 years

#### Bryan District

Henry A. Ondrasek  
Transportation Maintenance Technician  
21 years

#### Houston District

Julie M. Unger  
Maintenance Support Technician  
10 years  
Richard Carlos  
Transportation Maintenance Technician  
16 years

#### Laredo District

William A. Boatwright  
Maintenance Section Supervisor  
29 years

#### Waco District

Willis L. Patton, Jr.  
Transportation Maintenance Technician  
24 years  
James E. Capps  
Transportation Maintenance Technician  
24 years

#### Human Resources

Alice B. Stroman  
16 years

#### Information Systems

Chai Kit  
Information System Analyst  
27 years  
Beatrice V. Kirk  
Information System Analyst  
25 years

#### Transportation Planning and Programming

Anne E. Gannaway  
Contract Specialist  
30 years

### October 2003

#### Houston District

Edward A. Decker  
Ferry Engineer/Maintenance Supervisor  
20 years

Bobby E. Irvin, Sr.  
Ferryboat Engineer  
12 years

John M. McIntire  
Purchaser/Material Specialist  
14 years

Robert N. Kridner  
Construction Inspector  
37 years

#### Odessa District

Sharlot B. Sharrock  
Office Technician  
19 years

#### Pharr District

Arturo Hernandez  
Sign Technician  
16 years

#### San Angelo District

Robert A. Miller  
Transportation Maintenance Technician  
23 years

#### San Antonio District

James D. Chambers  
Construction Records Auditor  
18 years

#### Tyler District

Dennis I. Goode  
Transportation Maintenance Technician  
22 years

#### Information Systems

Johnnie L. Zak  
29 years

Thomas B. Orton

Network/Data Branch Manager  
30 years

#### Motor Carrier

Gail K. Skaggs  
Permit/Commercial Vehicle Officer  
17 years

## Calendar

### 2003

#### DECEMBER

**18** Commission Meeting, Austin  
**24** Christmas Eve Day (holiday)  
**25** Christmas Day (holiday)  
**26** Day after Christmas (holiday)

### 2004

#### JANUARY

**1** New Year's Day (holiday)  
**8-9** Bid Letting, Austin, CST  
**19** Confederate Heroes' Day (holiday)  
**19** Martin Luther King, Jr. Day (holiday)  
**29** Commission Meeting, San Antonio

#### FEBRUARY

**10-11** Bid Letting, Austin, CST  
**16** President's Day (holiday)  
**18-20** Annual District Sign Shop Meeting, College Station, ATL  
**26** Commission Meeting, Austin

#### MARCH

**2** Texas Independence Day (skeleton crew holiday)  
**9-10** Bid Letting, Austin, CST  
**25** Commission Meeting, Austin  
**30-4/1** 2004 Construction & Pavement Conference, San Antonio, CST  
**31** Cesar Chavez Day (optional holiday)

#### APRIL

**1** 2004 Construction & Pavement Conference, San Antonio, CST

The complete TxDOT Calendar is on the intranet at <http://crossroads.org/pio/articles/calendar.htm>

## TxDOT Roundup

Continued from Page 19

ment aims to provide an expanded opportunity for all employees to take courses online, to look up references, to have an alternative resource for information, and for other uses.

Green describes the project as "a browser-based system" used to manage electronic learning and information. "By using the site," she said, "course developers can create and deploy 'learning objects' that employees can access by searching on topics or keywords." She adds

that links to documents, manuals and external resources — all searchable by a topic or keyword — also may be included on the site.

### AWARD CITES DWI CAMPAIGN

The Traffic Safety Section of the TxDOT Traffic Operations Division has received the 2003 national award from the National Commission Against Drunk Driving for the Jacqueline Saburido "Before and After" campaign.

The campaign message has reached a global audience estimated at more than 350 million. The audi-

ence is growing, as Saburido recently was featured on the nationally televised Oprah Winfrey Show.

Texas leads the nation in alcohol-related traffic fatalities with more than 1,800 people killed in 2000 in crashes involving alcohol. The public-awareness campaign aims to improve roadway safety by reducing the number of drunk drivers who use Texas highways.

Saburido's story is featured on several Web sites including: [www.helpjacqui.com](http://www.helpjacqui.com), [www.texasdwi.org](http://www.texasdwi.org) and [www.ncadd.com](http://www.ncadd.com). ★



# backtracks



After a month away from the back page, **backtracks** is back with this unidentified bridge photo. The TxDOT Photo Library would like some information about this picture, if you have it. If you know anything about this photo — or the bridge, contact Buddy Allison at (512) 463-8612, or by e-mail at [balliso@dot.state.tx.us](mailto:balliso@dot.state.tx.us).

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